

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
April 18 & 19, 2006**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9 A.M., on April 18, 2006, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair O'Neal, Ed Barnes, Bob Distler, Dick Ford, Elmira Forner, Carol Moser and Dale Stedman.

MINUTES APPROVAL

The Commission moved approval of the minutes of the March 23, 2006 Ferry Tariff Hearing be deferred to the May 16 & 17, 2006 meeting in order to provide adequate time for review. The motion passed unanimously.

RENAMING BERKELEY STREET OVERPASS TO "FREEDOM BRIDGE"

Randy Hain, Olympic Region Administrator, WSDOT, presented Resolution No. 679 requesting renaming of the Berkeley Street Bridge to Freedom Bridge in honor of our troops.

Senator Carrell shared his support of the bridge renaming.

It was moved by Commissioner Forner and seconded by Commissioner Ford to approve Resolution No. 679 renaming the Berkeley Street Bridge to Freedom Bridge. The motion passed with Commissioner Distler abstaining.

DESIGNATE SR 22 "BLUE STAR MEMORIAL HIGHWAY"

Don Whitehouse, South Central Region Administrator, WSDOT, presented Resolution No. 678 designating a portion of SR 22 as a Blue Star Memorial Highway. He expressed that there has been extensive community support for this designation.

Representative Chandler shared his support of the designation of a defined portion of SR 22 as a "Blue Star Memorial Highway".

It was moved by Commissioner Moser and seconded by Commissioner Distler to approve Resolution No. 678 designating a defined portion of SR 22 as a Blue Star Memorial Highway. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS / UPDATES

Reema Griffith, Executive Director, presented the Commission's *draft* Agency Strategic Plan for comments. Commissioner's discussed the *draft* plan and provided brief comments.

Commissioners provided updates of the WTP, Rail, Tolling and TIP team's recent activities.

Commissioner Distler provided an update regarding WSF activities.

SR 519 IN-DEPTH PROJECT REVIEW

Dan Mathis, Division Administrator, FHWA, shared the FHWA's perspective on the SR 519 project. He provided an overview of the most critical needs that they see the project addressing as well as how the project should proceed given the current differences of opinion. As originally proposed the project had two phases and was designed to improve access and egress to the Seattle waterfront and particularly for freight access to and from Port of Seattle facilities. Phase I was an on ramp to I-5 over Atlantic Street just south of the Mariner Baseball Club Ballpark. It has been completed. Phase II was to be an off ramp from I-5 over Royal Brougham just North of the Ballpark. It has been delayed for several years because of the refusal of certain original signors of the Memorandum of Agreement to proceed with the obligations under the agreement.

Commissioners asked several questions and Mr. Mathis responded regarding the FHWA's interest in the project. In particular, Mr. Mathis stated that the project EIS must include the original Phase II version to be acceptable to the Federal Government.

Commissioner's expressed various concerns regarding the status of the project.

Patricia Otley, Chair, FMSIB, stated that FMSIB supported and advocated for the SR 519 project as originally proposed and rated it the top projects of significance to freight in the state. The Royal Brougham link represented Phase II of the project originally and is critically important to freight movement.

Dan Gatchet, President, Washington Trucking Association, noted that the original SR 519 plans were truck friendly, whereas the new alternatives are not as truck friendly. It is not clear why the design has changed from the original plan which worked far better for truck traffic. The trucking industry was not consulted regarding the proposed change.

Terry Finn, Port of Seattle, explained that the port relies on the timely movement of freight in order to get loads in and out of the port in an efficient manner. Port facilities are assets to the entire state and this project is of major importance.

Andrew Johnsen, Director of Governmental Affairs, BNSF Railway, noted that comments shared today have offered valuable history and perspective on the issue. He emphasized that the region's trade competitiveness is largely dependent on freight flow, noting that the President of China was currently visiting Seattle because of its trade prominence; not to see the Mariners. Mr. Johnsen stated that the BNSF was particularly upset because the original proposal, now being delayed, would eliminate an extremely dangerous at grade pedestrian and vehicle crossing of mainline BNSF tracks. He stated that any improvement must include such a separation. BNSF had invested several millions of dollars in the project in order to obtain the separation and to eliminate the hazardous crossing situation.

John Munson, ILWU Local 19, shared that he feels that SR 519 needs to be completed otherwise there will not be freight on the waterfront. In his opinion Royal Brougham is being gentrified.

He noted that there is tremendous pressure being put on the City of Seattle to change property zoning in order to locate residential properties along the waterfront.

It may in fact take legislative action to move the project forward. He is concerned about the loss of high paid jobs on the Seattle waterfront.

Commissioner Ford expressed strong concerns regarding the situation. He recommended that a letter or other communication be put together that lays out the issue and makes recommendation to the Governor. He emphasized that resolution must be found and results must be produced.

Roger Patten, citizen, stated that he is an architect and has a proposal/design for a multi level interchange to address freight traffic needs on SR 519 as well as the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

Chair O'Neal agreed to pursue Commissioner Ford's request to prepare a letter to the Governor outlining the Commission's concerns regarding the project.

TOLLING STUDY – REPORT ON PUBLIC ATTITUDE RESEARCH

Frank Wilson, Frank Wilson and Associates, Inc, shared highlights of the Commission's recent public outreach focus groups. He noted that in general the public is receptive to tolling although there are some concerns that would not be impossible to deal with.

In addition there were 16 stakeholder interviews held with community leaders and interest group representatives. The interviews indicated that the most important transportation related issues for stakeholders were safety, economy, congestion relief and fairness in tolling. All in all the focus groups and stakeholder interviews produced encouraging results concerning the acceptability of tolling in the State of Washington.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Secretary MacDonald, WSDOT, explained that the SR 519 Project has been complicated by gridlock. He noted that the frustration of the railroad and the freight community is understandable given the situation. The Department is working with the City of Seattle to try and work out an alternative plan that meets a number of needs and reconciles them. The alternative configuration is less attractive than those that meet the immediate needs of the freight system, as well as being a financially more expensive configuration. He emphasized that right now the biggest safety issue is the Alaskan Way Viaduct. He suggested that a facilitator might assist in bringing the parties together to resolve this complicated situation. He moved on to share information regarding safety issues along a 47-mile stretch of US 2 corridor. A corridor working group has been developed to work with local communities along the route to seek improvement recommendations. For additional information you may visit the project website at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/us2/rdp. The Secretary and Commissioners discussed highlights of various other projects around the state.

Chair O'Neal welcomed the presence of Senator Bob Oke in the audience.

**TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE – REVIEW ELEMENTS OF FINANCIAL PLAN
AND POSSIBLE TOLL REDUCTIONS FOR ELECTRONIC TOLL USERS;
UPDATE ON APPOINTMENT OF CITIZEN’S ADVISORY PANEL**

David Pope, Tacoma Narrows Bridge Toll Systems Manager, WSDOT, explained that today’s presentation is to provide the Commission with an understanding of the toll setting process for the TNB. The presentation included the various elements of base assumptions and alternative scenarios for toll rates. In addition, discussion was held regarding the legislative budget proviso which provides an incentive to electronic toll users. The toll setting schedule and the role of the TNB Citizens Advisory Committee were briefly discussed.

PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD

Don Williams, citizen shared his concerns regarding fairness of toll setting on the TNB.

POTENTIAL MILITARY RAIL TRAFFIC IMPACT

Lieutenant Colonel Steven P. Schneider, Deputy Installation Transportation Officer, Fort Lewis, provided an informational briefing regarding the Strategic Rail Study for Fort Lewis. This study would identify shortfalls and successes. He shared information on the specifics of rail capacity and deployments of the Fort Lewis North Rail Yard as well as line use and modeling results. He provided an overview of the proposed improvements and associated costs for the North Fort line. In closing he emphasized that partnerships with the Ports of Tacoma and Olympia, as well as the state, are needed for the project to be successful. (for further information on this presentation refer to agenda item 9 handout)

WASHINGTON STATE STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN

Lowell Porter, Director, Traffic Safety Commission, explained the composition of the Commission membership noting that all of the members are from a broad range of partners that are involved in traffic safety.

Steve Lind, Deputy Director, Traffic Safety Commission, opened the presentation with an overview of the development of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) that came about as a result of SAFETEA-LU that will be a more collaborative and data driven approach to transportation safety. The key to the plan is that it be a collaborative effort of partners. Benefits of the plan will be to promote efforts among organizations to address transportation safety issues. The federal government is supportive of states adopting the plan in order to aide in the prevention of accidents and fatalities on our highways. Mr. Lind emphasized the importance of support for traffic safety by the Transportation Commission

Chris Madill, State Traffic Records Coordinator, Traffic Safety Commission, explained the importance of collecting traffic data. This information is vital to decision makers and provides a critical link to identifying problems. The data also provides a method to measure successes. The Traffic Records Committee provides a statewide forum for the creation and coordination of improvement projects as well as the implementation of technology. He provided an overview of eTrip (Electronic Traffic Information Processing) Program.

The primary function and objective of eTrip is to coordinate projects to improve traffic records and replace paper-based data collection and exchanges with automated electronic systems.

BOND AUTHORIZATION REQUEST

Jeff Caldwell, Transportation Funds Manager, Strategic Planning and Programming, presented Resolution No. 677 amending Resolution No. 671 Attachment A.

It was moved by the Commission to approve Resolution No. 677 amending Resolution No. 671 Attachment A to show the amounts and uses of bond sale proceeds appropriated for capital programs in the 2005-07 Transportation Budget. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m., on April 19, 2006.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DAN O'NEAL, Chair

DICK FORD, Vice-Chair

EDWARD BARNES, Member

CAROL MOSER, Member

ELMIRA FORNER, Member

ROBERT S. DISTLER, Member

DALE STEDMAN, Member

DOUGLAS MACDONALD, Ex-Officio Member
Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL